Lose Weight by Taking a Break From Your Diet

The last lesson showed you some wise strategies that you can use at the grocery store to help you lose weight. However, when you're trying to lose weight, you'll find that the most effective diets strike a healthy balance between discipline and flexibility.

It's okay to take a break from your diet sometimes. These are some of the benefits of giving yourself a little time off and smart ways to indulge while you watch your weight.

Benefits of Being Flexible About Your Diet

1. **Boost your metabolism.** A diet that is excessively low in calories actually slows down your metabolism so you eventually need to eat less just to maintain the same weight. Providing your body with the fuel it needs will keep you in prime condition.

2. **Strengthen your willpower.** Restricting yourself to a grapefruit for breakfast every day is bound to make you crave French toast with extra maple syrup. **Reward yourself once in a while so you'll be less vulnerable to temptation.**

3. **Demystify forbidden foods.** As long as you get most of your calories from fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, you can probably make room on your plate for a sensible serving of whatever you crave most. Split a brownie with a friend or eat a small bag of chips.

4. **Keep weight off.** Break the cycle of losing weight and gaining it back. **The easier your diet is to live with, the better your chances of sticking with it.**

5. **Be gentle with yourself.** Approach weight loss as a positive change you want to make to improve your wellbeing and enrich the time you spend with your loved ones. A constructive mindset will help you select foods that are good for you and bounce back from any lapses.

Smart Ways to be Flexible

1. **Take a long term perspective. Focus on eating healthy over the course of your life** rather than cutting back each year just before swimsuit season. Eating balanced meals and snacks most days will keep you trim.

2. **Identify your greatest challenges.** Analyze where your diet gets put to the test. Maybe you celebrate the holidays with multi-course feasts or spend evenings snacking while watching TV. Slimming down a few favorite recipes or sipping tea may give you as much pleasure.

3. **Bank your calories.** Save up for a night out at your favorite Italian restaurant. Serve grilled fish for dinner the night before so you'll feel carefree about ordering the lasagna and a gelato for dessert.

4. **Keep a journal.** It's easy to lose track of how much we really eat. Making a notation of everything you eat can help you put on the brakes before a small handful of jelly beans turns into half a bag.

5. **Get a hobby.** Boredom leads to overeating. **Save your extra calories for the foods you really love.** If you're just looking for something to do, take up photography or knit a scarf. Try volunteer work or taking an adult education class.

6. **Burn extra calories.** Of course, exercise is the other side of the weight loss equation. If you eat an extra helping of dessert, add another 10 minutes to your daily workout. Engage in regular strength training like lifting weights so you'll build up muscle mass that burns more calories even when you're at rest.

7. **Make the most of your treats.** Savor your food. Make those exceptions to your usual diet truly special. Dish out your ice cream in a pretty glass bowl with a garnish of berries. Bake your own pita chips and sprinkle them with fresh herbs.

You can reach your ideal weight without giving up cheesecake forever. **Allowing yourself a little wiggle room is the key** to developing a healthy eating plan that you can stick with for life.

Another important, but little known, weight loss strategy has to do with your meal times. Discover what's so important about meal times by tuning in to the next lesson!

Here's what you need to do today:

Take a break from your diet! Give yourself permission to eat one of your favorite food temptations today! Avoid going overboard. Eat a small serving today and plan for incorporating this food into your diet every once in a while.

Remember, it’s not cheating! It’s beneficial to work in a break from your diet here and there!